

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5928
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY SANA
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
USINT HAVANA
USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOGADISCIO 0447

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: MOPS, SO, ET
SUBJ: OBSERVER SEES DEMISE OF THE SOMALI ARMY IN THE OGADEN.

1. DURING A MEETING ON MARCH 7, THE EGYPTIAN MILITARY ATTACHE
INSISTED THAT FRESH SOMALI FORCES WERE STILL BEING FUNNELLED
DOWN THE TUG WAJALE JIGJIGA ROAD TO BE GROUND UP PIECEMEAL IN
WHAT HE CALLED THE LOST BATTLE FOR JIGJIGA. COL AHMED MOHMOUD
ABDEL-HALIM SAID HE SIMPLY COULD NOT RATIONALIZE THIS CONDUCT,
UNLESS IT REFLECTED AN ENTIRELY IRRATIONAL DECISION TO SEE THE
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OLD SOVIET-INSTRUCTED SOMALI ARMY HUMILIATED ON THE FIELD.
HALIM ASSERTED THAT IN DISCUSSIONS WITH DEFENSE MINISTER
MOHAMED ALI SAMATAR WEEKS AGO, HE, HALIM HAD HAMMERED HOME
THE THREAT TO JIGJIGA FROM THE NORTH, BUT THE SOMALIS CHOSE
TO IGNORE THAT POSSIBILITY, AND COMMITTED THEIR MAIN FORCES
TO A DEFENSE OF THE MARDHA PASS AND RIDGELINES EXTENDING
NORTH AND SOUTH OF THAT POSITION. NOW THEY ARE HOPELESSLY

CUT OFF, HALIM ASSERTED, AND HAVE NO CHANCE WHATSOEVER TO RETREAT AS UNITS, AND ABSOLUTELY NO CHANCE OF BRINGING OUT ANY OF THEIR EQUIPMENT. THE EGYPTIAN THOUGHT IT POSSIBLE THAT MANY SOMALIS MIGHT BE ABLE TO EXFILTRATE THEMSELVES INDIVIDUALLY, BUT EVEN THIS, HE ADDED WILL NOT BE AN EASY TASK EXCEPT FOR THE HARDEST AND HIGHLY MOTIVATED.

2. QUESTIONED ON HIS EARLIER OBSERVATION THAT SOME OF THE SOMALI FORCES MIGHT REVERT TO UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE MISSIONS, HALIM MODIFIED THAT POSITION. HE THOUGHT THERE WOULD BE INDIVIDUAL RESISTANCE. SOMALIS WHO KEPT THEIR RIFLES AND HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO SHOOT THE ODD ETHIOPIAN WOULD CERTAINLY DO SO, BUT HE WAS SCEPTICAL OF ANY POSSIBILITY OF ORGANIZED OR SUSTAINED RESISTANCE, AT LEAST IN THE NORTHERN SECTOR OF THE OGADEN. HE ANTICIPATED THE ETHIOPIAN AND CUBAN FORCES WOULD HAVE NO PROBLEM IN EITHER SEVERING JIGJIGA'S ROAD LINKS WITH BORAMA AND HARGEISA, OR WITH GODE IN THE CENTER WHICH HE EXPECTED TO BE THE NEXT ETHIOPIAN TARGET.

3. HALIM THEN ASKED IF WE KNEW WHERE DEFENSE MINISTER ALI SAMATAR WAS AT THE MOMENT. HE ADDED THAT HE WAS NOT SURE EITHER, BUT HAD HEARD THAT SAMATAR WAS IN THE JIGJIGA AREA IN COMMAND OF SOMALI UNITS THERE. WE HAVE INDEPENDENTLY HEARD THIS SAME RUMOR FROM WESTERN JOURNALISTS IN MOGADISCIO. HALIM OBSERVED THAT HE THOUGHT AS A MILITARY MAN

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THAT IT WAS JUST AS WELL THAT A GENERAL BE WITH HIS TROOPS AT TIMES SUCH AS THESE.

4. COMMENT: THE EGYPTIAN IS CLEARLY READY TO WRITE OFF THE SOMALI ARMY. HE ALLOWED THAT THERE MIGHT BE MILITIA OR LIGHTLY ARMED AND ILL TRAINED TROOPS ON THE SOMALI FRONTIER COVERING HARGEISA AND BORAMA, BUT HE DID NOT THINK THEY WOULD CONSTITUTE A REAL IMPEDIMENT TO AN ETHIOPIAN OR CUBAN DRIVE. THE SOMALI ARMY WHICH SET OFF SO CONFIDENTLY FOR HARAR AND DIRE DAWA SEVEN MONTHS AGO IS A VANQUISHED FORCE, THE COLONEL SAID, AND FOR ALL PRACTICAL PURPOSES, THE WAR IN THE OGADEN IS OVER.

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